Author(s): Hietalahti, Jarno

Title: The Necrophilic Laughter : Humor as a Social Pathology

Year: 2018

Version: Published version

Please cite the original version:

Hietalahti, J. (2018). The Necrophilic Laughter : Humor as a Social Pathology. Fromm Forum, 22, 38-49. https://www.fromm-gesellschaft.eu/images/pdf-Dateien/Hietalahti_J_2018.pdf

Hietalahti_J_2018

The Necrophilic Laughter
Humor as a Social Pathology

Jarno Hietalahti

Erich Fromm Research Fellow 2014–2016

Paper presented at the 2nd International Erich Fromm Research Conference
in June 2018 at the International Psychoanalytic University in Berlin

„The Necrophilic Laughter: Humor as a Social Pathology“, in: Fromm Forum (English Edition – ISSN 1437-1189), 22 / 2018, Tuebingen (Selbstverlag), pp. 38-49.

Abstract: In this article, I claim that humor can be a form of social pathology. In opposition to the general humor-affirmative atmosphere, I develop the critical tradition of humor research, and suggest that there is a darker side to fun and laughter. Using insights from Henri Bergson's theory about laughter and Erich Fromm's critical social thinking, I formulate a novel theoretical combination which opens up fruitful perspectives on contemporary humor and its social nature. This empirically motivated conceptual position helps us to understand the role and function of humor and laughter. My conclusion is that parts of the contemporary humor catalogue reflect collective destructive and even death-orientated tendencies. The main argument is that if humor is not in line with humanistic values and is not based on a life-orientated worldview, it is in danger of becoming pathological.

Introduction

Among humorists, academics, and a wide lay audience, there is a general belief that humor and laughter[1] are always positive phenomena. Be it about forming relationships (see Lefcourt 2001), or health benefits (see Martin 2008), or expressing freedom (see Morreall 1983), the consensus states that humor is good. This optimistic view, however, can be and has been challenged. For instance, Michael Billig (2005) argues that the general humor-affirmative atmosphere is merely an ideology without a scientific basis.

In this article, I continue the tradition of critical humor research. Using insights from Henri Bergson's considerations about laughter and, particularly, Erich Fromm's social psychological theories, I claim that humor can be seen as a form of social pathology[2]. However, I do not ar-

[1] I use humor as an umbrella concept which is typical in the Anglo-American tradition of humor research. Also, in this text laughter refers to the laughter triggered by humor.

[2] In this paper, pathology does not refer to a bodily disorder but instead, to a general idea of »something being

gue that humor is always negative or destructive. Quite to the contrary, in the light of Fromm's social theory, I argue that humor can be both *biophilic* (life loving) and *necrophilic* (death loving, non-sexual meaning), to use Fromm's terms; I will clarify these concepts further later. As I focus on humor as a social pathology in this article, I will emphasize the necrophilic side of the subject matter here.[3] I suggest that there are necrophilic tendencies present in the contents of humor (e.g. contemporary jokes), in the forms of humor (e.g. produced television comedies), in reactions to humor (e.g. relating to humor as a product of consumption), as well as in the ways that contemporary humor research is done (e.g. so called clinical humor studies). The conclusion is that humor appears to be pathological in many respects.

1. Laughter as an Expression of the Living

Henri Bergson is the first philosopher to use the distinction between »alive« and »lifeless« to elaborate humor's social function. Bergson's most original thought is that in the heart of humor, there lies a mechanical rigidity. That is, we are amused when we discover an apparent artificial mechanism working behind what we first thought to be organic. Bergson states that »We laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing.« (Bergson 1913, p. 58.) Bergson bases this idea on his idea of *creative evolution*, from which he draws a distinction between the material and spiritual worlds. In Bergson's theory, evolution is motivated by *élan vital*, a special kind of »vital impetus« which redeems the creative impulse of humans in the middle of deterministic evolution. In his vision, spiritual life flows through the world. (Bergson 1911.) Generally, living creatures are not machines, and living beings do not repeat themselves like machines do; in comparison to living beings, machines appear to be more rigid and inflexible as they are built for a very small number of purposes, and so they end up doing the same thing for as long as they exist. (Bergson 1913, p. 34.)

Even though there are plenty of examples in which Bergson's theory is very usable, it is, nevertheless, too simple, and has gotten him into trouble with humor theorists. For example, Anton C. Zijderveld has observed how humor is not anything mechanical but the opposite, something living (Zijderveld 1968). Arthur Koestler makes this critique explicit, and claims that rigidity in contrast with organic suppleness is not a necessary condition for ridiculousness. If this was the case, then Egyptian statues, Byzantine mosaics, as well as an epileptic fit would be the greatest forms of humor. Koestler concludes his criticism by stating that if Bergson's claim was true, then nothing would be funnier than a dead corpse. (Koestler 1964, p. 47.)

These critical remarks, I suggest, do not hit the intended target. It is clear that, say, a corpse in itself is not a particularly funny sight according to Bergson. A corpse, by definition, is dead and rigid; not something rigid on the surface of the living[4]. I suggest that the core of Bergson's the-

wrong« in a social sphere.

[3] Fromm claims that a *necrophilic individual* can be identified from, for instance, that person's behavior, facial expressions, choice of words, phantasies, and how the individual treats others (Fromm 1973a, pp. 408 f.). In this article, however, I focus more on the commonly shared features of a society (see Fromm's definition of *social character* in Fromm 1941a, pp. 275–296), so I will emphasize Fromm's ideas about the necrophilic character of a society, and apply them to interpret the phenomenon of humor on a social level.

[4] I do not discuss the religious or cultural meanings of the deceased here. The basic assumption is that we do not expect the corpse to act; there is not an artificial mechanism on the surface of living in this case. By this, I do not

ory is in the idea that laughter is about life, and it is an objection to the tendency to restrict human life to being mechanical and non-autonomous. Thus, it is important to recognize the very premise of alive humor:

> »Life presents itself to us as evolution in time and complexity in space. Regarded in time, it is the continuous evolution of a being ever growing older; it never goes backwards and never repeats itself. [...] A continual change of aspect, the irreversibility of the order of phenomena, the perfect individuality of a perfectly self-contained series: such, then, are the outward characteristics [...] which distinguish the living from the merely mechanical.« (Bergson 1913, pp. 88 f.)

This distinction between living and mechanical also holds for societies as, for Bergson, life and society are not mutually exclusive but they intertwine: society has to be understood as a living being as it is formed by individual living beings. In this social setting, Bergson argues, laughter is a corrective, a tool for social punishment, and via laughter people who behave like machines are guided back to the ever flowing way of human life (Bergson 1913, p. 44, 87). Billig has noted that in this corrective process laughter is actually internally cruel because it does not offer any sympathy for its target (Billig 2005, p. 111). In the moment of laughter this may be true, but Bergson argues that laughter cannot offer compassion or it would not accomplish its social task (Bergson 1913, p. 197). So, even if laughter punishes and hurts, it has an educational function; it is something that guides the ridiculed individual towards a better life. This is the promise of laughter for Bergson: it is a promise of life which opposes the mechanical ridiculousness which Bergson understands as a threat to a life and a society. As Bernard G. Prusak (2004, p. 381) puts it, first comes the society, then comes a challenge to the society, and finally comes the defense in the form of laughter.

With his basic clauses, Bergson comes close to what Fromm calls *biophilia*, that is

> »the passionate love of life and of all that is alive; it is the wish to further growth, whether in a person, a plant, an idea, or a social group. The biophilous person prefers to construct rather than to retain. [...] He wants to mold and to influence by love, reason, and example; not by force, by cutting things apart, by the bureaucratic manner of administering people as if they were things.« (Fromm 1973a, p. 406.)

The ethical conclusion is that everything that serves life is good, and everything that serves death is evil (Fromm 1973a, p. 406), and, I add, this also holds true for humor. If humor and laughter fulfill these conditions, they are apparently positive phenomena. However, following Fromm's position as a critical theorist, it is possible to question Bergson's premises.

2. Humor as an Expression of Inner Deadness

Even though Bergson is generally optimistic about humor, he leaves some room for doubt in certain subordinate clauses; that there is a possibility that humor itself could be a form of social pathology. However, he merely mentions these possibilities and basically neglects them when he states that

want to neglect, for instance, the sorrow that is present in funerals.

> »[laughter's] function is to intimidate by humiliating. Now, it would not succeed in doing this, had not nature implanted for that very purpose, even in the best of men, a spark of spitefulness or, at all events, of mischief. Perhaps we had better not investigate this point too closely, for we should not find anything very flattering to ourselves. […] In this presumptuousness we speedily discern a degree of egoism and, behind this latter, something less spontaneous and more bitter, the beginnings of a curious pessimism which becomes the more pronounced as the laugher more closely analyses his laughter.« (Bergson 1913, pp. 198 f.)

Instead of closing our eyes to these possible pathological aspects of laughter, one should put them under close scrutiny to reveal the unflattering sides of humor. The common assumption is that laughter belongs to the world of life and the living, and in opposition, the dead are silent. But with the help of Fromm, it is possible to turn the tables around: what if we are already dead inside?[5]

Fromm's concern is best formulated in the idea of *necrophilia*. Here, Fromm does not refer to the sexual meaning of the word but, rather, to an attitude, a character syndrome, which describes a person who is obsessively oriented toward things, and not towards living organisms. To put it otherwise, this kind of person is not able to relate to the world and to others in a living way – he cannot relate to life constructively. Life should be characterized by growth but »the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things.« (Fromm 1964a, pp. 35–37.) According to Fromm, necrophilia can be described as routinized, stereotyped, and unspontaneous behavior, as well as a tendency to hold no difference between living and lifeless, and a lack of positive relatedness to others (Fromm 1973a, pp. 392 f.). In opposition, *biophilia* is a passionate interest in all that is living, as was defined above.

Fromm remarks that a person or a society is typically not purely biophilous or necrophilic, but instead, both sides are present.[6] As he writes: »Nothing more than the relative strength of biophilia and necrophilia is what determines the whole character structure of a person or a group.« (Fromm 1990a, p. 30.) It should be noted that necrophilia does not refer only to the interest in traditional forms of decay (feces, corpses, etc.) but instead, it is a passionate orientation towards the *lifeless*. In this view, Fromm claims, mechanical, clean and shining machines are expressions of death, and in a similar manner the world of total mechanization is the world of death. Also, if a person or a society is related to the world in a purely intellectual way, the person or society aims to study phenomena only to know how they can be manipulated, and Fromm adds, this is the »essence of modern progress, the basis of the technical domination of the world and of mass consumption.« (Fromm 1973, pp. 389–391.) Fromm also opens up the

[5] For Fromm, a mere pulse is not enough to be alive in a deep humanistic sense. This is, of course, a metaphorical statement, but the guiding idea is intriguing: that there can be pathological tendencies in what we consider natural or good.

[6] Fromm explains that there is no clear border between the necrophilous and the biophilous character orientation: »In many, both the biophilous and the necrophilous trends are present, but in various blends.' (Fromm 1964a, p. 35; see also Fromm 1973a, p. 408). The question is, then, which orientation is the most dominant in a person (Fromm 1947a, pp. 83–87).

possibility of understanding how humor can reflect the inner deadness of a person and a society. While explaining how a necrophilic character transforms all into lifelessness, he mentions that even »joy, the expression of intense aliveness, is replaced by ›fun‹ and excitement« (Fromm 1973a, p. 389).

The distinction between *fun* and *joy* is crucial when discussing humor as a social pathology. Fromm claims that we live in a world of joyless pleasures (Fromm 1976a, p. 145); that is, in a world full of different kinds of fun which, however, do not answer to the various problems of living in a humane manner: these funs do not reflect the biophilic attitude. Of course, fun can be highly pleasurable and even addictive. In having this kind of fun and laughing our hearts out, we may be intensely satisfied, but this certain kind of peak experience is based on »passions that [...] are nevertheless pathological, inasmuch as they do not lead to an intrinsically adequate solution of the human condition. Such passions do not lead to greater human growth and strength but, on the contrary, to human crippling.« (Fromm 1976a, pp. 145 f.)

Fromm claims that a necrophilous person considers feelings and thoughts as things, something to possess and to manipulate (Fromm 1964a, p. 37). In this view, humor becomes a mechanical product which is seen as an instrument for fun. Humor appears as a social pathology if it is merely a product of consumption, if it is endlessly repetitive, and if it is totally detached from other spheres of living: if humor is only a mechanical object and a product for consumption, it does not reflect joy. If the sole aim is to find how humor works and how one can be, say, as funny as possible, humor *in itself* appears to be mechanical and rigid; it is torn apart from the spontaneous living relationships between individuals.

Fromm argues that joy is not a peak experience similar to fun, but it is instead a state of feeling which is also an expression of the humane and positive relatedness to the self, others, and to the world (Fromm 1976a, p. 146). Thus, Fromm demands, humor should be connected to the biophilious way of living, and to the whole character of an individual. This perspective opens up the possibility that the highest goal of humor is not, for instance, to trigger the loudest laughs; instead, in humanistic humor, the central aspects are, among others, opening our eyes to the world, sharing a positive connection with others, and demonstrating the aspects of humane being.

3. Social Laughter

Both Fromm and Bergson focus on the social level of human life in their theories, and both of them consider laughter a deeply social phenomenon. Laughter is always the laughter of a group as Bergson (1913, p. 6)[7] claims, and it has a social function. For Bergson, this function is always in the service of life, but as previously stated, Fromm critically challenges this position. Contrary to Bergson's hopes, it is not granted that the group of laughers shares a biophilic orientation. Modern humor theories (especially the incongruity theory and its latest formulations, see e.g. Hurley et al. 2011) suggest that humor is born when there is a conflict between cultural categorizations. We grow up in a certain culture and adopt the conceptualizations within that culture. So, when we observe a deviation from our cultural norms, we find it funny

[7] Similarly, also Fromm argues that jokes are an expression of shared character structure, or to put it another way, one social group tells jokes in a different manner than some other (see, e.g. Fromm 1970a, p. 186; 1973a, p. 409).

and laugh at that oddity as social beings.

The previous observation helps to understand Bergson's error: he understands people – as individuals as well as the whole society[8] – essentially as beings of life and therefore as opposite to everything mechanical and lifeless. Fromm's insight is that human being contains both possibilities. The central problem, then, is not if some individual appears to walk like a machine, but instead it is problematic if people start to believe and perpetuate the cold, necrophilic attitude towards life. Fromm formulates this concern as follows:

> »Eventually, man in the most developed industrial societies becomes more and more enamoured of technical gadgets, rather than of living beings and processes of life. [...] Interest in life and in the organic is replaced by interest in the technical and inorganic.« (Fromm 1992b, p. 36.)

Simply put, our lives are situated in a social and historical setting. We are not just individuals, but human beings, and according to Fromm, the very principle of being human is to be in relation to others. Fromm calls the central connective element between different individuals *social character* (see Fromm 1941a, pp. 275–296). My claim is that humor reflects the social character, but also strengthens it. This is a crucial point when we go further with Bergson's theory about laughter. Bergson's conclusion is that when we notice some flaws and laugh at them, we are trying to make things right. If an absent-minded professor forgets his glasses on his forehead and then searches for them everywhere, his reason does not work in the lively way it should, and his students laugh at him. After finding the glasses, the professor naturally puts them in the right place and tries not to repeat his mistake anymore. This is the simple formula of the corrective nature of laughter. The important question, then, is: What does laughter correct? For what reason?

Bergson admits that also a society itself is ridiculously rigid if it shows »anything inert or stereotyped, or simply ready-made« (Bergson 1913, p. 44). In his vision, this is an offense against the inner suppleness of life which should be the essence of the society. Bergson's own examples in relation to this are quite innocent as he focuses on the ceremonial side of social life. (Bergson 1913, pp. 44 f.) However, Bergson is worried how treacherously mechanical thinking may start to reign over our minds and how we might start to consider it natural. This attitude adopts ever subtler forms and, for instance, people start to believe how different kinds of administrative enactments are natural. Another worry is that we might suppose that our behavior is elastic even though in a wider perspective it appears to be artificial and eventually a sign of the mechanization of our bodies. This is, as Bergson writes, inert matter dumped down upon the living. (Bergson 1913, pp. 48 f.) If we cannot see beyond the inertia, we start to believe that all this is good, even right. Hence, we might lose our comic insight which is based on the living in contrast to the mechanical. As mentioned earlier, according to Bergson, a living creature should never repeat itself, but we are in danger of continuously repeating ourselves without even realizing it. Fromm discusses this illusion, what he calls *the pathology of normalcy*,

[8] For Fromm, the relationship between an individual and a society is dialectical: »The individual's manner of life is determined by society. Society itself is nothing without individuals.' (Fromm 1992a, p. 17.) The notion is twofold: first, the social elements influence the individual personality, and second, the psychological factors affect and change the social processes.

and observes how it is possible that pathological processes become socially patterned; when this happens, the »whole culture is geared to this kind of pathology and arranges the means to give satisfactions which fit the pathology.« (Fromm 1973a, p. 396; see also Fromm 1955a.) The Frommian concern, then, is that the whole picture of humor and the community of laughers may be twisted in such a way that we are not even aware of it. If the social life is routinized, stereotyped, unspontaneous, and it lacks what Fromm understands as a positive relatedness to others, society can be called at least partially necrophilic. It is possible to find these and other similar traits also in a modern humor catalogue; and this claim considers the humorists, audience, and even many academic attempts to interpret humor. If one merely calculates how to trigger laughter as efficiently as possible, it reflects a necrophilic aspect of humor. Next, I will present how modern ways of consuming fun belong to the pathological sides of humor.

4. Consuming Humor

Nowadays, we purposefully find our ways to different kinds of amusing occasions which guarantee laughter, be it television comedies, stand-up shows, or Internet videos. In a Frommian perspective, we are guided by entertainment and always searching for new opportunities to have fun. »Never put off till tomorrow the fun you can have today,« Fromm quotes from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (Fromm 1992b, p. 35).

Fromm argues that we *consume* humor, and in »the act of consuming the person is passive, greedily sucking the object of his consumption while at the same time being sucked in by it« (Fromm 1990a, p. 83). Instead of laughing at automatons, we *are* laughing automatons. Our laughter is a reflection of the ideals of the surrounding society where everything is up for sale. Fromm demonstrates how even our personalities, ideas, feelings and smiles are commodities (Fromm 1992b, p. 36), and his concern is how »cheerfulness, and everything a smile is supposed to express, become automatic responses which one turns on and off like an electric switch« (Fromm 1941a, p. 242). The whole dulling element of humor is manifested in the idea of fun. Fromm argues that deep down, fun is just a shallow way to run away from our pervasive feeling of boredom; fun might ease the symptoms but cannot cure the disease. We continually search for fun which, in turn, is determined and managed by the »amusement industry« (Fromm 1992b, p. 40). In this Frommian view, laughter is not an expression of a full living human being but instead something pathological. The troublesome notion is that even in relation to humor we start to think »in terms of calculations and probabilities rather than in terms of convictions and commitments« (Fromm 1992b, p. 91). This reduces humor to a commodity.

In the biophilic aspect, humor is something completely different. It is a spontaneous expression of positive relatedness between individuals. According to Michael Maccoby, Fromm understood the sense of humor as an »emotional equivalent of a cognitive sense of reality« (Maccoby 2009, p. 143). I interpret that this does not mean just what we conceive of as humorous but also how we relate ourselves to these kinds of incongruent occasions. For Bergson, laughter is an expression of life: it judges the mechanical rigidity in human life. This fits into Fromm's idea if we grasp reality from the basis of biophilia. But if we understand everything as numbers and calculations, and believe that the world is fixed and thoroughly controllable, we express rigidity, mechanization, lifelessness and death: that is, the necrophilic character orientation. In the middle of the amusement industry, the spontaneous element is under the threat

of disappearing. The reactions of the audience are calculated in advance and the audience is fed by what it believes it wants to consume.

As pointed out, Fromm cannot accept the idea that society would inevitably advocate life. One of the central critical themes in his written works is that the modern society appears to cherish many inhumane values: for instance, greed, competition, and having instead of being. Because of these underlying values, prevailing society makes its members to repress their impulses to be fully alive, to love and to be free, as these humanistic values do not fit well with the maxim of profit gaining etc. (e.g. Fromm 1941a, 1955a, 1976a.) The central problem is that we so easily think that we actually are loving, alive, and free. For Fromm, this is just an illusion, but a hard illusion to break as we have the feeling that we are in control. In reality, however, things are different:

> We believe that we control, yet we are being controlled – not by a tyrant, but by things, by circumstances. We have become humans without will or aim. We talk of progress and of the future, although in reality no one knows where he is going, and no one says where things are going to and no one has a goal. (Fromm 1992b, p. 26.)

If our society, and our products of humor, promote something other than humanistic values, we have to accept the possibility that our whole society might be sick (see Fromm 1955a). In this light, Bergson's theory can be reformulated: we do not laugh any more at people who act like machines if this kind of mechanical performing is the current norm in human life. The laws of humor state that it is impossible to see anything funny in a picture where everything is as it should be. This is the central difference in the conceptualization about the social aspect of humor between Fromm and Bergson. In a sick society our laughter does not represent life but the shared necrophilic attitude which we have adopted and which we call the common sense. Bergson is correct to claim that humor has a social significance and is a way to blend in with others. Thus, by consuming all the fun around us we actually aim to survive and to operate in our surroundings. But social adaptation is not enough in the Frommian perspective if, at the same moment, we run laughing away from the biophilic way of living. Adaptation is not enough, if we are not free in a humanistic sense; the consumer's freedom to choose between different kinds of comedies (which are virtually identical in Fromm's [1956a, pp. 13 f., 16] view) is not genuine freedom.

5. Discussion

For Bergson, humor is always from one root; we laugh when a living being acts like a machine or gives us an impression of an automaton. Bergson believes that laughter is in its heart good, and he hopes that a society grows towards goodness, and in this progress we learn to be more flexible and more adaptive. But in a Frommian framework, we have to consider human beings, as well as the society, as ambiguous creatures. Humor is based on this ambiguity, and Fromm's distinction between fun and joy emphasizes our paradoxical nature. Fun is the expression of the laughter of the automaton who just consumes entertainment. Joy, on the other hand, is an expression of human growth and relatedness to the world and to others. This classification is in line with how Fromm thought the sense of humor to be an emotional equivalent of the cognitive sense of reality. Thus, humor is an integral part of our worldview, and the dominant

character orientation is decisive in determining what an individual or a society considers amusing.

In a Frommian framework, it is possible to claim that there is a necrophilic tendency in the modern humor catalogue; humor appears to be repetitive, and it is often designed for consumption. In this analysis, one does not even need to calculate the different topics of the jokes to conclude that humor in modern Western societies appears to be, in some sense, dead. Naturally, without wide empirical data, it is questionable to state that the whole cultural catalog of humor is necrophilic. Instead, I propose, it is possible to find necrophilic traits in many forms of current humor, including topics (humor which is aimed just to shock and irritate people), humor as a product of culture industry (consumption of numerous humor series), in some stand-up comedians' and laymen's ways of relating to humor (ridiculing minorities; showing superiority to others via laughter), as well as in many of the so-called clinical humor studies (which aim to dissect and manipulate humor instead of to *understand* humor in relation to the totality of a person or society). These necrophilic aspects of humor make it plausible to suggest that humor can be, and often is, a social pathology. I believe that this insight opens up new possibilities for deeply empirical social research.

Even though Fromm sees necrophilic tendencies in modern societies, he is always hopeful. He claims that »the presence and even the increase of antinecrophilous tendencies is the one hope we have that the great experiment, *Homo Sapiens*, will not fail« (Fromm 1973a, p. 398). There is still joy and genuine laughter in the world, and humane humorists whose biophilia glows in their works. All humor is not routinized and dull: not all joy is fun.

References

Bergson, Henri 1911: *Creative Evolution*. Trans. A. Mitchell. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
Bergson, Henri 1913: *Laughter. An Essay on The Meaning of The Comic*. Trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell. New York: The Macmillan Company. The English translation originally published 1911.
Billig, Michael 2005: *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humor*. London: Sage.
Fromm, Erich 1941a: *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Henry Holt and Company 1994.
-- 1947a: *Man for Himself. An inquiry into the psychology of ethics*. London: Routledge 2003.
-- 1955a: *The Sane Society*. New York: Henry Holt and Company 1990.
-- 1956a: *The Art of Loving*. New York: Continuum 2000.
-- 1964a: *The Heart of Man. Its Genius for Good and Evil*. New York: AMHF 2010.
-- 1970a: *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis. Essays on Freud, Marx, and Social Psychology*. New York: Henry Hold and Company 1991.
-- 1973a: *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Henry Holt and Company 1992.
-- 1976a: *To Have or To Be?* New York: Open Road / Integrated Media. e-book, available from iTunes Store.
-- 1990a: *The Revision of Psychoanalysis*. Boulder and San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press 1992.
-- 1992a: *Beyond Freud. From Individual to Social Psychoanalysis*. New York: AMHF 2010.
-- 1992b: *On Being Human*. New York: Continuum 1994.
Hurley, Matthew; Dennett, Daniel, and Adams, Reginald 2011: *Inside Jokes. Using Humor to Reverse-Engineer the Mind*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
Koestler, Arthur 1964: *The Act of Creation*. London: Hutchinson.
Lefcourt, Herbert 2001: *Humor: The Psychology of Living Buoyantly*. New York: Kluwer Academic.
Maccoby, Michael 2009 »Fromm Didn't Want to Be a Frommian.« In R. Funk (ed.) *The Clinical Erich Fromm. Personal Accounts and Papers on Therapeutic Technique*. 141–4. New York: Rodopi.
Martin, Rod 2008: »Humor and health.« In V. Raskin (ed.) *Primer of Humor Research*, 479–521. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Morreall, John 1983: *Taking Laughter Seriously*. Albany: SUNY.

Prusak, Bernard 2004: »Le rire à nouveau: Rereading Bergson.« In *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 62, No. 4 (Autumn 2004), 377–88.

Zijderveld, Anton 1968: »Jokes and their relation to social reality.« In *Social Research* vol. 35, No. 2. 286–311.